

nothing to say, but stay on the phone by nosecoffee

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Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Georgie Denbrough, Mike Hanlon, Patricia Blum Uris, Richie Tozier, Sonia Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris

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Summary:

(being in love is the same thing as being alone)

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What if he does something wrong? What if he says something that accidentally convinces Eddie not to come back to LA and confess his feelings? Or what if Richie tries his hardest to convince him to come back to LA but it scares him off, anyway?

Richie couldn't bear it.

(What if he messes up and George McFly never takes Lorraine to the prom?)

A telephone that can call the past is pretty shitty in terms of time travel, in Richie's opinion

nothing to say, but stay on the phone

Author's Note:

Title from “Ketchum, ID” by boygenius

I promise absolutely no consistency in chapter word counts and I’m genuinely so sorry this is so short

I hate having uncompleted up, I usually just post fics in big one shot clumps but this draft is about to expire so i decided to make this a chaptered work despite this not being fully written yet. The amount of chapters my change just based on how much I write and how I decide to split it up.

Anyway, I hope you like this :)

December 17, 2019

Problem number one is that Richie is technically Jewish. He’s never actually practiced, neither did his parents, but he used to go to Temple for important occasions, like Rosh Hashanah, and shit like that.

He’s never properly celebrated Christmas, either, just tolerated its existence, and bought his friends nice pens and other stationary at a time that *just so happened* to coincide with the twenty-fifth of December, going coy and saying stuff like *looky-here, would you guess it, a nice spiral bound notebook for a Miss Beverly Marsh*.

And Beverly would laugh and roll her eyes and say, “Thanks Rich, you didn’t have to.”

Stan gets it. He’s always been more involved with the Jewish community than Richie, helped along by his father being the Rabbi of their town. But he’s also more tolerant of their friends’ Christmas plans. He actually buys people proper excellent presents that they wanted, and they get him things he wants in return.

“Do you feel like a bad Jew for participating?” Richie asked him last year. They were at Bev’s in New York, and they drank steadily through the evening.

Stan arched his eyebrow, and asked, “Do you feel like a bad friend for *not* participating?”

So, yeah, he doesn’t celebrate Christmas.

Problem number two is that his team - his manager and writers and agent - they all know this about him. So when his manager said, “You don’t have any Christmas plans, right?” Richie had responded, *right*.

Problem number three is that he *does* have plans for Christmas. Mike’s hosting them all, this year, in his family’s farmhouse, refurbished and renovated, acres and acres of rehabilitated land, no doubt looking like a fucking Winter Wonderland. He and Eddie are also hosting Stan and his wife Patty at the old Kaspbrak residence, since Mike’s house is two bedrooms short, and they’re too old to be sleeping on air mattresses.

In any case, they’re all gathering at Mike’s on Christmas Day to exchange presents and have lunch and get thoroughly drunk. It’s the first time they’ll all be together in a year. It’ll be the first Christmas since Stan-

The point is, he does have plans for Christmas, but according to his team, he’s in LA until the twenty-sixth to get the scripts Richie’s been working on for months finalised and sent off to HBO to be checked. According to his manager, there’s no way they’ll turn down this pitch. According to his manager, this is the best stuff he’s written in years.

All these problems culminate into one big problem, which is breaking the news to Eddie. *Not* turning down the offer, *not* telling his manager to fuck right off and he’ll talk with him about it in the New Year. No, break the news to Eddie, his husband of nearing on six years, that he won’t be able to travel to Maine for Christmas because his manager said so.

Eddie knows that there’s going to be a meeting, Eddie knows the

scripts are almost done. Eddie knows a lot of it. What he doesn't know is that to get the scripts finished and edited on time, he has to stay in LA. There's no way he could get them done in airport terminals and Mike's front porch, in their bed in the too-early morning when he should be sleeping.

He needs uninterrupted time to get this finished.

Richie pulls into their driveway and stares up at the house. It's a nice house. Richie bought it with what was supposed to be his college fund when he was nineteen. He wanted to get his career started in LA and grabbed the nicest house a suburb off from the city within his price range. Eddie moved in only a few years later when he changed his major and his college and needed a place to sleep because he was fucking broke and too stubborn to go home to Derry, tail between his legs.

They've slowly done it up over the last seventeen or so years, and now it's actually a home. Richie doesn't want to have to walk in and say this. He bangs his forehead against the steering wheel.

"You're home late," Eddie says casually when Richie walks into the kitchen. He's right. It's two hours past when he said he'd get home. Eddie didn't text him once. Their flight takes off at eight tomorrow morning, which means Eddie's quite likely to have them up at five am, to compensate. He must know something's up already - he's always been really intuitive about stuff like this.

"Yeah, sorry." Eddie hums away the apology, and pulls a Tupperware container from the fridge, putting it in the microwave. Probably the dinner Richie left to get cold with no explanation. "Meetings ran late, Steve just kept going over things with me."

"Do you wanna talk about it?" The way he says it says that it's not a question.

Richie sits down on a barstool at the counter and leans on his elbows. "It's the show."

Eddie frowns, "What happened?"

"Nothing really," he shrugs. He knows Eddie sees through him. They've known each other far too long for Richie to outright lie and not be called out by his husband. "They just want to pitch the show soon. Once the scripts are done."

He nods and turns away, looking over at the microwave. It's still got two minutes left. "So in the new year?" Eddie asks.

Moment of truth. Richie pulls his arms back and holds tight into the edge of the island bench until his knuckles go white. "On the twenty-sixth."

He hums, "Of January?"

"Of December."

Eddie stops. He's looking at the microwave again. "What?"

Richie grimaces, "They want me to pitch on Boxing Day."

Eddie turns around slowly. There's a half-resigned look on his face, like he already knows this isn't something he can change, but is still conflicted on. "Can't Steve pitch it?" He asks, tone even further resigned than his expression.

"It's not Steve's show," Richie says immediately, and then winces as he adds, sarcastically, "They want it from *the genius mind* behind it."

"Don't these people have lives?" Eddie asks, heatedly.

"Apparently not," Richie shrugs, trying to ignore the warning signs that this will quickly turn into an argument, because maybe if he ignores it, it will go away. "Or they don't celebrate Christmas, which, you know, more power to them, really."

"Richie." He stares at his hands. He doesn't want to see the look Eddie's wearing. He already knows it's not good. He can't deal with the disappointment, the hurt right now.

Instead of saying this, he just murmurs, "I know..."

"You're not coming to Maine?" *There's* the hurt, the disbelief, the

disappointment. It would be impressive that he could predict its arrival if it weren't so sad.

"I'm sorry." And he means it. He *is* sorry, so sorry that he's ditching them for work, again. The more time that goes on, the less he sees of his friends. "If it was *literally* anything else I would blow them off, but I've been writing *Barry* since I was *fourteen*."

"Richie," Eddie says again, but Richie doesn't stop staring at his hands.

He licks his lips, suddenly aware of how dry they are - how dry his mouth is, *period* - and says, weakly, "This is all I've ever wanted."

"So, what?" He looks up. Eddie's expression has scrunched into one of frustration. "The Losers and I, we're chopped fucking liver? You're prioritising *the fucking show* over the rest of us?"

Richie swallows at the lump forming in his throat and croaks, "Eddie, you know it isn't like that."

"Tell me what it's like, then." Eddie doesn't shout. He used to, when he was younger. Now he just gets cold. That's how Richie knows he's angry. "I compromise *all the time* for you. And you *never* do the same."

The microwave beeps as it stops and Richie exhales shakily, "Eddie, don't-"

"Don't what?" Eddie snaps. Richie stares up at him silently. "Don't *what*? Say it."

"I'm not going to fight with you right now."

"Then when will you fight with me?" Richie stares at him. Eddie rests his hands on the edge of the counter and squeezes it until his knuckles go white. He doesn't look at him. He can't answer. There is no answer. There's nothing he can say that would be okay. He's surrounded by land mines and Eddie's urging him to take a step.

Eddie steps away from the counter, his knuckles flooding with colour as his hands hang limply at his sides. He pulls the plate of food out of

the microwave and sets it down on the counter carefully before murmuring, "I'm going to bed."

He walks out of the room. Richie's stomach grumbles even as he leaves his plate untouched on the counter. Eddie doesn't speak to him as they get ready for bed, and he doesn't speak when Richie tries to cuddle into his back, and he shrugs him away. That's fine, he's angry, it makes sense, Richie won't push it - but it sucks.

Eddie quiet is just *scary* .

~

December 18, 2019

Eddie gets up at five-thirty the next morning to catch his flight. It leaves at eight, but traffic at LAX is the worst, and Eddie is a risk analyst. Richie gets up to wave him goodbye. They don't talk too much.

Mumbles of where things are and groans of exasperation follow them through the house as Eddie gets prepared to leave, alone. And then Eddie hops in his car and winds down his window as the garage door slowly slides up.

"I'll see you on the twenty-seventh," Richie says, and Eddie nods, mutely, lips a tight and thin straight line. "I love you."

"You too," Eddie murmurs, and then reverses down their driveway. Richie tries not to feel like he's going to cry.

He texts Steve that he's working from home and goes back to bed.

~

He doesn't feel like going in to talk to his team. They're just going to keep drilling it in. *You need to get it done*. Richie doesn't feel like it, even though that's the whole reason he stayed behind. Instead, he rummages through their garage for an hour, mindlessly wading through junk, until he comes upon an old yellow rotary phone and

wonders why they unplugged the landline.

It makes absolute sense to just plug it back into the wall. Richie's pretty sure Eddie never stopped paying for it. If he rummaged through the home improvement documents in the office for long enough he'd know for sure.

It's at least a seven hour flight to Bangor from LA, and that's without a layover in Iowa, which Eddie has, so that's another two hours. Then it's a two hour drive from Bangor to Derry. Eddie would be exhausted from all the travelling, plus still mad that Richie decided to stay. Still, Richie dials in his old phone number and holds the receiver to his ear.

It rings about five times and then Stan says, "Hello?"

Richie pretends to not feel disappointed that Stan is who answered and instead crows, "Stan the Man! How you doing?"

"Richie?" Oh fuck, time zones. That's right, that's a thing. What is it? Like three hours behind or whatever? Three hours ahead? He can't remember. It's like eleven pm or something over there. And up north too. It's probably already dark.

"You know it," he says instead of anything else. They're thirty-seven, collectively; Stan could do with a late night once in a while. He's been a weirdo with early bedtimes for as long as Richie's known him.

"Eddie's asleep," Stan deadpans, sounding exhausted and frustrated.

"Oh, well that's fine," he says, trying not to sound disappointed. "I called to catch up with *everyone*, you know. Is Pat up?"

"Is *who*-?"

"Who's that?" Says another voice, further away, gravelly with sleep, familiar. *Eddie*.

"Richie," Stan says, stiffly, "he called for you anyway."

There's shuffling noises, Eddie says *goodnight* quietly and then his breath hits hard through the receiver, followed immediately by his

tired voice saying, "Hello?"

"Eddie." Richie says, his breath leaving his chest. It's the relief, the fact that Eddie wouldn't turn away at the chance to talk to Richie right now that hits him in the chest like a semi truck straight on.

"Richie," Eddie replies, and Richie hears the telltale scrape of a kitchen table chair being dragged out from its place at the table, followed by the soft whump of Eddie sitting down on it. "It's *eleven* over here."

He was right. Cool. "Shit, sorry, I always forget." Richie leans back against the bed frame, on Eddie's side. He misses him. He wonders if he'll be able to sleep without him tonight. "Stan said you were sleeping."

"I was," Eddie huffs. Richie can almost imagine him, sleep shirt and pants, rumpled, knees pulled up to his chest on those stupid yellow faux-leather kitchen chairs, phone receiver held to his ear. In Richie's head, he's younger than he actually is. In his head, Eddie's in his early twenties, still soft around the face, still dressing in shirts that are a size too big, hiding just how small he is beneath the material. "The phone woke me up."

"Yikes," Richie says, even though he only half means it, glad to hear his voice, "sorry."

"I..." Eddie sighs and there's a sound like he's scraping his nails against his scalp. "I didn't think you'd call."

Richie kicks absently at the carpet, a little confronted by this comment. Why did Eddie think he wouldn't call? Of *course* he'd call. "I just wanted to make sure you got in okay," he tells Eddie instead of everything else he wants to say.

"I got in fine," Eddie says, gruffly.

"Good," Richie says. They sit in silence for a moment. He knows they fought before Eddie left, but even this lack of conversation, however stilted, is strange.

"Look, Richie, I'm tired," Eddie eventually sighs, the force of his

exhale rattling through the receiver.

“Right,” Richie says and nods, heart sinking a little at the dismissal, “sorry Eds-“

“Don’t call me that,” Eddie snaps, interrupting. Richie lapses into silence. Eddie hasn’t objected to that nickname in years. Eventually he realised no amount of protesting would deter Richie from calling him stupid, endearing things. He must be *really* mad at him.

Eventually he manages to croak out, “I’ll call you tomorrow.”

“Oh will you?” This is said with a tone of slight surprise but mostly annoyance.

“Yeah,” Richie presses, desperate to make this right even if there’s really nothing he can do over the phone. “Earlier this time, ‘cause of time zones.”

He huffs on the other end of the line, and then says, “Fine.”

And then Eddie hangs up.

Richie tries not to feel hurt. Fifteen minutes later, it hits him that he didn’t tell Eddie he loved him. He pulls out his mobile and texts Eddie the message *goodnight love you*.

Eddie doesn’t reply.

Author's Note:

You guys caught the obvious twist yet? Landline is literally my favourite book, please read it if you haven’t already. I’ll try to post the next chapter soon, I swear. Please comment, I’m begging y’all